

Bjørn Hatterud

# Bjerke Tower Block - thirteen years on the third floor

## Blokka på Bjerke

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In *Bjerke Tower Block* Hatterud tells the story of the majority population from the unique perspective, of a disabled gay man, who begins his adult life scratching out an existence on disability benefits, and goes on to become a board member of Arts Council Norway. For thirteen years, from 2009 – 2022, Bjørn lived in a tower block in the poor, working class neighbourhood of Bjerke on the east side of Oslo. Bjørn befriended several of his elderly neighbours, such as the traumatised wartime sailor Bjarne next door, and Ester on the ground floor, who grew up among the toxic landfills on the Langøyene Islands on the Oslo Fjord.

During the thirteen years at Bjerke, Bjørn overcomes the poverty and social exclusion defining his life, achieving cultural recognition and acclaim as a writer, art curator and public intellectual. Bjerke has in course of these thirteen years gradually become an attractive and expensive neighbourhood. Hatterud reveals some of the untold consequences of Norway's oil wealth for the outlying, low-income neighbourhoods of Oslo. The depiction of Bjerke's sociocultural evolution combines the keen observations of the author with historical facts and personal experiences from his own life. The book offers a fresh, queered perspective on the Norwegian national narrative, the critical reception has been overwhelmingly positive. Hatterud writes with precision, insight, and warmth about life and the people he met in the tower block he will soon leave behind.



Photo: Agnete Brun

Bjørn Hatterud is an Oslo based writer, musician, and art curator, who grew up gay and disabled in a working-class family in a small Norwegian rural community. He has experienced national success with his first two critically acclaimed books, *Mot normalt* (*Against Normality*, 2018) and *Mjøsa rundt med mor* (*Me, Mum and Mjøsa*, 2020). In his books Hatterud writes of his life's extraordinary trajectory, and of how growing up as an outsider led him to forge a pathway into art, literature and non-mainstream culture – the spaces where he discovered identity and freedom. *Bjerke Tower Block* is his third book, which confirms his position as one of Norway's leading narrative non-fiction writers. Hatterud is awarded The Fritt Ord Prize and The National Book Critics' Award for his writing.

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#### Interview

[Read our interview with the author here](#)



'It is incomprehensible that someone could be so good at reeling off cultural and sociological considerations, but Hatterud is world-class'

Randaberg24

'Bjørn Hatterud has so to speak created his own genre. He has a love for communities that are falling apart or at least changing.'

NRK

'Hatterud's descriptions of the street life of Bjerke, and the tower block where he lived are brilliant.'

Dagens Næringsliv